

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 11, 2007

**SUPREME COURT NAMES CIRCUIT JUDGE JAMES M. WEXSTTEN
TO FIFTH DISTRICT APPELLATE COURT**

The Supreme Court of Illinois announced Thursday the appointment of Circuit Judge James M. Wexstten to the Fifth District Appellate Court. Judge Wexstten will fill the vacancy created by the untimely death of Justice Terrence J. Hopkins who passed away on October 16, 2006.

Supreme Court Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier of the Fifth Judicial District recommended the appointment of Judge Wexstten to the Court after an extensive application, evaluation and interview process that included review by a seven-person screening committee appointed by Justice Karmeier. Twenty persons applied to fill the vacancy.

Judge Wexstten's appointment is effective February 2 and will terminate December 1, 2008, when the position will be filled by the November 2008 general election.

"I'm incredibly honored by the trust placed in me by Justice Karmeier and the Illinois Supreme Court," said Judge Wexstten. "It's a bittersweet acceptance because of my deep affection for Terry Hopkins. I pledge to apply the law fairly and impartially."

Judge Wexstten, 56, has served as a circuit judge in the Second Judicial Circuit since 1988 and has been elected chief judge of his circuit twice during that period. He is immediate past president of the Illinois Judges Association, past president of the Jefferson County Bar Association, member of numerous ISBA and Supreme Court committees, instructor at the Supreme Court's seminars for new judges and an original member of the Judicial Ethics opinions Advisory Committee.

His judicial retention numbers have been consistently high and a 2002 Illinois State Bar Association judicial evaluation rated him as highly recommended for the office of Justice of the Appellate Court. His civic and charitable activities are extensive, including service as past president of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois.

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Before his career on the bench, Judge Wexstten practiced law as owner of the Law Office of James M. Wexstten. He also was a partner with Giamanco and Wexstten, and was employed as an associate with the same firm prior to becoming partner. He also served as the United States Bankruptcy Trustee for the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Illinois.

Judge Wexstten is a graduate of Nokomis High School; he attended Kaskaskia College and graduated with a B.S. degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He received his *juris doctor* from Southern Illinois University School of Law.

Judge Wexstten was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1977, and has also been admitted to practice in the U.S. District Court - Southern District of Illinois and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Clarence W. DeMoss, a senior partner of Hohlt, House, DeMoss & Epplin in Nashville and a member of a previous appellate court screening committee, served as chairman of this committee.

Other members of the committee were: Robert Coble, a senior partner of Coble & Milone in Flora; Matthew Hortenstine, a lawyer with Taylor Law Office in Effingham; Phil Lading, a partner with Roth, Evans & Lading in Granite City; Tim Neubauer of Neubauer & Overstreet in Mt. Vernon; Gayl Pyatt of Pyatt Law Office in Pinckneyville and Rebecca Whittington from Rebecca Whittington Law Office in Carbondale.

The Second Judicial Circuit encompasses 12 counties in southeastern Illinois, including: Crawford, Richland, Lawrence, Wabash, Edwards, Wayne, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, White Gallatin and Hardin.

The Fifth Judicial District covers 37 counties in southern Illinois. Those counties are: Christian, Shelby, Montgomery, Bond, Fayette, Effingham, Jasper, Crawford, Lawrence, Richland, Clay, Wayne, Marion, Jefferson, Clinton, Washington, St. Clair, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, Perry, Franklin, Hamilton, White, Edwards, Wabash, Gallatin, Saline, Williamson, Jackson, Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski and Massac.

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